



Take Care of Your Septic System

Know how your septic system works

Thousands of Maryland residents have septic systems to treat and dispose of home wastewater.

A septic system has two parts: a septic tank and a soil absorption drainage system. Sewage flows via piping from the home into the septic tank, where bacteria decompose the solid materials and nutrients. Then, the wastewater flows into the drain field or dry well, where it filters through the soil.

Be aware that problems may arise

Septic systems that do not work properly can transmit disease and harm the environment.

Problems occur when sewage is brought to the ground surface because:

- The system gets waterlogged after a heavy rain;

- A large amount of wastewater flows into the system in a short amount of time and floods the septic tank;
- Soil in the drainage area becomes clogged; or
- Pipes break or become obstructed.

Be alert for signs or problems, such as:

- Sewage odor near the septic tank or drainage area;
- Slow-running drains and toilets; or
- Sewage on the ground.

(over for more info.)



Howard County
Health Department



Avert problems with good maintenance

- Have the tank inspected and pumped at least once every three years. (Look in the telephone book under “Septic Tanks - Cleaning.”)
- Know where the septic system is located and make a sketch of the area. If you do not know where the system is, ask a previous owner of your house or contact the well and septic program at 410-313-1771.
- Keep trees and shrubs away from the drainage system.
- Keep heavy equipment and vehicles off the drainage system.

- Properly dispose of pesticides, paint thinner, and other chemicals - don't pour them down the toilet or drain.
- Avoid using septic system additives.
- Keep garbage, grease, sanitary pads, tampons, cigarettes, disposable diapers, and other objects out of the septic system.
- Avoid doing a large amount of laundry in one day.
- Conserve water when using showers, dishwashers, sinks, bath tubs and toilets.



For more information

Call one of these numbers:

Howard County Health
Department: 410-313-2640
(TDD 410-313-2323)
www.hchealth.org

University of Maryland
Cooperative Extension
Service (for printed
material): 410-313-2707



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